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A STATEMENT ON SELF-GOVERNMENT

The March 3, 1958, Tien Feng reprints a statement on self-government which had been prepared as long ago as the Peking Conference in July 1954. In this statement the Chinese churches disavow any intention of making any radical changes in the structure of the church, but only of gaining their independence. It begins by saying, "We do not want to change the sacred doctrine which God has revealed to us through the Bible and through our Lord Jesus Christ; we do not want to alter the constitution, organization or traditions of the church or to break fellowship with Christian men and women throughout the world. We only wish to use Bible teaching to oppose imperialism and its defiling control over our holy Church. With the good Christian men and women throughout the world who truly love the Lord we wish to be united, that we may together pray and struggle for world peace and for the realization of God's will, truth and righteousness."

The article goes on to show how in the various denominations mission board control was maintained in spite of a nominal autonomy of church organization, and gives the organizational setup of such typical denominations as the Anglican, the Church of Christ in China, and the American Methodist, as proof of that charge. And even such a false facade of autonomy was lacking in some churches, such as the China Inland Mission and the Assemblies of God, where control was directly in the hands of the missionaries.

The movement for independence began as far back as 1906, when Pastor Yu Kuo-chen in Shanghai started the revolt against foreign domination in the church which finally resulted in the organization of the "China Jesus Independent Church" (Chung-kuo Yeh-su-chiao Tzu-li-hui). Many churches and church members seceded from the mission-board-dominated churches to join this new church, and it was accordingly very unpopular with the missionaries, who did everything they could to make things difficult for Pastor Yu. Finally the missionaries saw that they would have to "fight fire with fire", and so they organized an "independent" church of their own. This was the "China Christian Independent Church" (Chung-hua Chi-tu-chiao Tzu-li-hui), organized in Shantung in 1912 by Liu Ssu-i and Liu Tz'u-t'ang. The article quotes from founding statements to show how servile in attitude this church was towards the missionaries, and so concludes that the new church was just a false front for continued missionary domination. The mission board even turned over some property to the new organization. Local landlords were also prominent in its establishment. (Notice that these two independent churches are independent of each other. The Protestant Directory put out by the NCC in 1949 confuses the two. It really describes the former, but in the index gives it the name of the latter. It does not give any data on the latter church at all. Some, but not all, of the congregations in the latter have gone into the Church of Christ in China.)

According to the same reasoning, the Jesus Family was not a truly indigenous development,

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for several missionaries (Nora Dillenbeck, Lillian Greer, etc.) were very sympathetic and helped Ching Tien-ying from the early beginnings in 1920, when he organized the "Holy Followers Society" (Sheng T'u She), and down through the organization of the Jesus Family itself in 1927. Similarly the evangelist Ku Jen-en was supported by an American army chaplain, and the Woodberry family of the Christian and Missionary Alliance helped Ch'ao Shih-kuang develop the Spiritual Food (Ling-liang) group of churches.

The article goes on to analyze succeeding church history, John R. Mott's visit to Shanghai in 1927 and the Madras Conference in 1938, with the purpose of showing that any concession in church control was only reluctantly made by the missionaries, and for the purpose of holding on more tightly to the control, particularly financial, which was still in their hands.

Now that control is in our hands, and we must use it wisely. "Let us arise and build." (Neh. 2:18)

FATHER CYRIL WAGNER'S REPORT

Father Wagner, after years of imprisonment, is now in Pittsburgh. In a recent report he shows to what extent a Catholic will go to obtain the sacrament. He used to receive Red Cross packages from America, in which would be a small bottle of liquid marked "To be taken after meals due to the lack of vitamins." It actually was wine "disguised by an authentic-looking label designed by an American druggist whose brother is a priest." The package also contained a small package of candy wafers. The candy wafers were authentic, but the 'paper separators' were really small discs of unleavened bread.

He was for a considerable time in the prison hospital, and he brings a charge against the prison physician which seems incredible. He says, "The doctor was given his orders by Communist bosses and carried them out - or else. A patient in one bed is to linger in suffering. In another bed there is a patient who must die. In yet another there's a patient who must be made to recover immediately."

ELIMINATION OF SUPERSTITION

A number of articles on this subject have appeared in the Chinese press recently. On September 4 the Peking People's Daily had an account of how the East Wind, that is, the socialization process in China, had awakened a very superstitious man so that he had finally turned his bronze idol over to the Communists. In another account from Kweichow, we are told that the young men of a certain cooperative through their study of the General Line and through debating the question "Does God Exist?" had raised their awareness to the wastefulness of superstitious practices. "On their own initiative, the young men first of all pulled down idols in their own homes, and then pulled down the idols in other homes. After several days of mobilization propaganda, all the idols were pulled down in all the homes of the cooperative members, and photographs of Chairman Mao were hung up. (Would this be "the seven other devils more evil"?)

In Huahsi village (in or near Kweiyang) all the idols were pulled down. One Taoist contributed the ancestral tablets that had been kept by his family for more than 300 years, and the wood in them was used for making a small cart. "Now, Huahsi chu is a chu without gods."

The minority tribes of Yunnan each had its own set of superstitions. In Yuankiang they "used to slaughter animals as sacrifices during each spring sowing. They did not transplant seedlings until the migratory birds had passed through and the mango trees were in full bloom. In production women must observe four 'must nots': they must not transplant seedlings, must not build irrigation works, must not plow the land, and must not remove the weeds. It was said that women were dirty by nature, and if they do these jobs, the indignation of their gods and ghosts would be aroused. Nearly all the minority nationalities in Yunnan believed that the mountains, the land, the sun, water and trees were controlled by ghosts. They thought they were not allowed to repair the lavatories and to apply fertilizer to the fields, and they dared not engage in production at night." Now, according to the report, all this has been changed. Their spiritual fetters have been removed and their thought liberated. (And the traditional safeguards against overworking their women have been broken down!)

Another article is entitled "A Victory for Atheism." Chairman Mao said thirty years ago, "The idols were set up by the peasants, and in time they will pull them down with their own hands; there is no need for any one else prematurely to pull down the idols for them." This prophecy, the article says, is now coming true. "The masses have come to recognize that since happiness can be created by them by relying on the leadership of the Communist Party and their own labor, why should they look to gods (whoever they might be)? As a result, the masses on their own initiative have pulled down these idols." There are still places where superstition is rampant, but the writer exults in the thought that "the spiritual fetters which have bound the people for the past several thousand years will soon become a thing of the past."

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA

This book by John King Fairbank, Professor of History at Harvard University, first appeared in 1948, and now in 1958 appears in a completely revised and enlarged second edition. After about a hundred pages given to a general account of Chinese society and culture, the cultural history of China during the 19th and 20th centuries, especially the 20th, is penetratingly discussed. An excellent chapter on "Communist China" sums up the history of the past ten years.

The reference to the United States in the title gives a prominence to that aspect of the subject which the book itself hardly sustains. I am reminded of the probably mythical reporter who, when called upon to write an article on Chinese Music, first read the encyclopaedia article on China, and then the encyclopaedia article on Music, and combined the results. Mr. Fairbank does achieve a greater unity than that, but the discussion of American relations with China is pretty much confined to the two chapters entitled "Our Traditional China Policy" and "United States Policy and the Nationalist Collapse." In the latter chapter he defends the Institute of Pacific Relations and the China experts of the State Department against the McCarthyist attacks of 1951-52. He is convinced that the Communist Government is here to stay, and that we must learn to live with it, while at the same time preserving the independence of Taiwan.

This is a book to read and ponder on.

CHURCH NEWS

Two Britishers who are Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested recently in Shanghai for "conducting subversive activities under the guise of religion." They are Stanley Ernest Jones and Harold George King. On October 14 this government action was approved by a meeting of the Shanghai Three Self Committee, with Y. T. Wu in the chair. Episcopal Bishop Robin Chen said, "We enjoy full freedom of religious belief, but we cannot tolerate the counter-revolutionary disruptive activities carried out by imperialists and counter-revolutionaries under the cloak of religion." Independent Church leader Hsieh Yung-chin also spoke in the same vein. Coincident with the arrest, the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses was completely banned.

The Catholic International Fides Service for October 25 reports that a certain Chinese religious person was summoned by the police of the section where he lives, and beaten merely because he was the addressee of a letter from his religious superior. Fides adds, "The very fact that a person receives mail from abroad makes him suspect." It goes on to state that young Catholics are being arrested en masse in Shanghai, among them being Margaret Kung, niece of the imprisoned Bishop Ignatius Kung. She was arrested on September 13.

For six months now the Communist press in China has kept a very complete silence in regard to Catholic matters, in contrast to its volubility about the patriotic association in 1957 and the first two or three months of 1958. But Fides does not consider this an indication of improvement in the situation. Rather, "the religious persecution in China is going on without abatement."

Representatives of seven counties of China Inland Mission churches in Honan met in Loho in November 1957 in order to "raise the political consciousness of members and to stop disturbing conditions within the church." They voted to stop using the hymnbook Sung Chu Sheng Shih, and change to the hymnbook Sheng Shih Hsuan Chi. I do not know whether this action has any doctrinal or political significance, or is only a matter of practical availability.

The True Jesus churches of Peach River (T'ao Kiang) County in Hunan held their second